

Next, there is the pride of the *curious*. The man who is not content with simplicities, but must pry into mysteries; he would, if he could, climb to the Eternal Throne, and read between those folded leaves, and break the seven seals of the mysterious book of destiny. You know well our apostle has many things in his writings which are hard to be understood, yet he uttered them because of the Spirit; you never meet with any attempt in the apostle's writing—as you do in the preaching of some ministers, and as you do in the conversation of some professors—to reconcile predestination with free will. He was quite content to preach to men as free agents, and exhort them to repent; quite willing to speak of God as working in us to will and do of His good pleasure, while we also work out our own Salvation with fear and trembling. Paul was never curious to find out where the lines of truth met; he was perfectly content to take his doctrine from his Master's Spirit, and leave the old wives' fables, and endless genealogies and disputes, and questionings, to those who had no better guests to entertain.

Again—there is the pride of the *persecutor*; the man who is not content with his own notions, but would hunt to death another; the pride which suggests that I am infallible, and that if any man should differ from me—the stake and the rack would be the due deserts of so great a sin against so great a person as myself! Now, the apostle acted towards those who differed with him with the greatest wisdom and kindness, and though full often he was beaten with rods, or subjected to false brethren, and hauled before the magistrates, I think he had none of the spirit of Elijah that would bring down fire from heaven upon any man. He was kind, and had that charity which suffers long and hopes all things, and endures all things, and believes all things. In this, too, you have an instance of *all* humility. He had the humility of a man of generous spirit.

And there is the pride of the *impenitent* man who will not yield to God. He says, "I am free; I was never under dominion to any; my neck has never felt the rein, my jaw has never felt the bit." Not so our apostle. He was always humble, teachable, and filled even to sorrowfulness with a sense of his own unworthiness. "Oh, wretched man that I am," he said, "who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Far enough was he from rebellion against the Most High God; for he would sit at the feet of Christ and learn, yes, and he would lie at the foot of the throne in dust and ashes, and confess himself to be the very chief of sinners, and less than the least of all the saints! I think you will very soon learn from the contrast I have presented to you, what the apostle meant when he said, "in *all* humility." There are many sorts of pride. There are many sorts of humility, too. The apostle had them all; or rather they were blended together in a sweet mixture in his daily preaching and conversation. I hope this morning to give you a clearer view of the comprehensiveness of humility, and so I will put it to you in another shape.

Some of the old writers, who like to use terms to sound very much alike, say, There is a *proposed* humility, or humility before the service of God; there is an *opposed* humility, or humility during the service of God which continues under trial; and there is, thirdly, an *imposed* humility, when the soul, conscious of sin during the act, imposes upon itself the task of bending before God, and offering repentance for its sin. Not caring much for these terms, because I think that old writers went out of their way to make them, I will be content with the substance. There is humility *before* serving God. When a man lacks this, he proposes to himself his own honor, and his own esteem in serving God. How easy is it for us to preach a sermon, having our eyes upon our hearers, hoping that they will be satisfied with us, and will say, "He spoke right well—the man is an orator; he is eloquent." Yes, and how easy it is to propose to please yourself so that you may be able to say as you come down from the rostrum, "I have not failed today in my own judgment, and I am satisfied with myself." This is pride before service, and it will mar everything! If we do not come to God's altar humbly, we cannot come acceptably. Whether we preach or pray, or give alms, or whatever we do, it is necessary that we bend exceedingly low before we enter upon the work; for if not, self-seeking and self-glorifying will lie at the bottom of all, and God neither can nor will accept us.

Look at too many Christians! How little of that *humility before service* they have. They will pick that position in the church which will give them the most honors; and if there is work to do which will confer no position upon them, they leave that to others. If you require a man to occupy an honorable position in the church, you can find scores; but if you need one who shall be a menial in the house of God—who shall be the least in God's heritage—how difficult to find one! We are so pleased with the glitter of publicity, and the glory of man's esteem, that I doubt not that in us all there is time of choosing our position

for the *honor's* sake, rather than for God's sake! But it was never so with the apostle Paul. I think I see him now, working long past midnight making his tents, taking stitch after stitch with his needle through the hard canvas, and working away to provide for his own individual needs, because an ungracious people held back the laborer's reward. Then, I see that tent maker going into the pulpit with his hands all blistered with his hard work, as rough as a laborer's hands. You would say of him at once, in getting up to speak, *that* man never proposes to himself the praises of his hearers! He is not like the Grecian orator who will go anywhere to get applause, turn aside to tell any tale, or to preach anything if he can but excite his audience to say, "He is an orator! Let us write him down among the great names; let us put the crown upon his head, and celebrate him through the midst of Greece as being the golden-mouthed man who can speak right mightily, as if the bees of Hybla had hived their honey upon his lips!" Never could you see that in Paul; you could discover at once that his solitary aim was to win souls, and so to glorify Christ. Let us labor after this as a part of *all* humility.

But again—there is in the next place *humility during the act*. When a man finds that God is with him, he may be base enough to glorify himself. He may have been very humble, indeed, when he began the battle, but there is one enemy there at his feet, and another has just been dashed down by a blow from his right hand. The evil one whispers in his ear, "You have done well; you are doing well." And then pride comes in and spoils all! That is a splendid psalm which begins, "Not unto us." David thought it necessary to say it twice. "Not unto us, O Lord! Not unto us." Then he deals the deathblow with the other sentence, "But unto Your name be all the glory." To sing that song when you are trampling on your foes; to sing that song when you are reaping the great harvest; to sing that song when God's people are fed under your ministry; to sing that when you are going on from strength to strength, conquering and to conquer, will prove a healthy state of heart! Nothing but the most extraordinary grace can keep us in our right position while we are serving God and God is honoring us. We are so inclined to steal His jewels from the crown, to put them on our own breasts; if we would not steal the diadem itself, yet we look with longing eyes upon it as if we would like to wear it if but a single moment. I have thought, sometimes, how many Christians are like the son of Henry the Fourth, who when his father lies asleep, puts the crown on his head. You and I have done the same; we have forgotten God; He was to us as one who sleeps, and we began to put the crown on our own head. Oh, fools that we were! Our time for crown-wearing has not come! We do but anger our Father, and bring grief into our spirits when we think of crowning ourselves, instead of crowning Him; worshipping our own image instead of bending before the Lord God Jehovah.

Christian men and women, and especially you, O my own soul, let us take heed that while serving God, we serve Him as the angels do who cover their faces, and cover their feet while they fly upon His errands!

Then, there is another kind of humility to make up all humility—*humility after the service is done*. In looking back upon success achieved, upon heights attained, upon efforts which have been blest, it is so easy to say, "My right hand and my mighty arm have gotten me the victory." Men generally allow their fellow creatures some little congratulation. Can a man congratulate you without admitting that you may congratulate yourself? Now, there is respect and honor to be given to the man of God who has served his race and his Master. By all manner of means, let the names of Luther and Calvin and Zwingli be held in honor. Has not God Himself said it?—"The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." It was wrong in us if we did not honor God's servants, for it would seem as if we dishonored the Master. But it will never do for the servant of God to honor *himself*! After his work is done, he must lay his head upon his death pillow, saying, "I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies! What am I, and what is my father's house, that You have brought me here? I am, having done all, but an unprofitable servant; I have not even done as much as it was my duty to have done." Sunday school teachers, tract distributors, visitors of the sick, you that feed the hungry and clothe the naked—especially you deacons and elders, ministers of the church—see to it that you never, when your work is done, speak of yourselves or of your work. No; your brethren, even if you speak in apparently humble terms, will soon find, when you talk much of what you do, that you are proud of it. You may think that you have misled them, but you certainly have not; much less have you deceived your God! Take care that you put your finger on your own beauty. When you are painting another man, imitate Apelles, who drew Alexander with his finger upon

the scar; but when you are painting yourself, put your finger over your choice beauty, for depend upon it that the hiding finger of your modesty will be more beautiful than the beauty you conceal! Labor, then, for God's sake, for the Church's sake, for your own sake, to serve the Lord with all humility—humility *before* the act, humility *during* the service, and humility when all is done—"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind."

II. But, secondly, the TRIALS OF HUMILITY, or the dangers through which humility has to pass.

And first and foremost, one of the trials to which humility will be exposed is the possession of great ability. When a man has seven talents, he must remember that he has seven burdens, and he who has ten, if he has more than others, should feel that he has ten times any other man's burden of responsibility; and, therefore, he should be bowed down. Let a man feel that he possesses more power than another, more eloquence, more mental acumen, more learning, more imagination, and he is so apt to sit down and say, "I am something; I am somebody in the church." Yes, one may indeed speak with solemnity here. It is so ridiculous for us to ever boast of any talents which God has given us. It is as though the debtor in the jail should say, "I am a better man than you, for I am in debt 10,000 pounds, and you only a hundred." The more we *have*, the more we *owe*, and how can there be any ground for boasting there? A man might as well be proud because he is six feet high, while another is only five feet, six inches, as be proud that he has 10 talents, while another has only five. We are what God has made us, as far as gifts are concerned. If the Lord said to Moses, "Who has made man's mouth?" because Moses said he was of stammering speech, you may say that to yourselves if you can speak well. Or if you act well, "Who has made man's arm?" Or if you think well, "Who has made man's brain?" The honor never can be to the *thing* itself, but to that Mighty One *who made it* what it is! Great talents make it hard for a man to maintain humility. Shall I surprise you when I say that little talents have precisely the same effect? I have seen in my short time, some of the biggest men I ever set my eyes upon who were the smallest insects that were ever subjected to the microscope; some great men in the pulpit, too—stately, dignified, magnificent, majestic—men of whom a fortune could have been made outright if you could but have bought them at their proper value and sold them at what, in their opinion, they were worth; men who were only fit to be bishops—they never could have been the inferior clergy—a curate's place would have been utterly insignificant! To have been a tent-maker or an ordinary preacher like Paul would have been far beneath their level. They always have the idea that they were born on a very fortunate day, and that the world owes them the utmost consideration and respect merely for their doing human beings the honor of living in the midst of them, though there is nothing very much they have ever done! Now little talents often make a man proud. "There," he says, "I have but a trifle in the world, I must make a flare with it. I have but one ring, and I will always put the finger that wears that, outwards, so that it may be seen." It is a very common habit of all people who wear rings to keep the fingers on which they wear them always exposed to view, especially if they have only one ring! If a man has no gold in his pocket, he is sure to put on gold cuff links; and if a man has scarcely any wealth at all, he is sure to put it on his back, because he must keep up a position, and that position, never having been his rightful position, he is obliged to maintain at great cost.

Now, if you have little talents, and feel you have, do not swell and burst with envy. The frog was never contemptible as a frog, but when he tried to blow himself out to the size of the bull in the meadow, and *then* he was contemptible, indeed! I have frequently had this observation made to me in the most pompous manner by some little minister, "Oh, sir, I feel the danger of your position, and I always make it a matter of prayer to God that you may be kept humble." I am exceedingly obliged to the gentleman, but I am sure I could make it a matter of prayer for him, that he might be made humble, once in his life, by way of a change—for he has never yet known what humility is so far as he was personally concerned. Now, you know very well that it is just as easy for a man to be proud in his rags, as my Lord Mayor in his gold chain. There is many a proud one riding in his little cart quite as vain as my lord who rides in a gilded coach. Indeed, I dare say he, the last one, feels very little pride, but very great shame at having to make himself so ridiculous! You may be a king and yet be humble; you may be a beggar and yet be proud; you may be great and yet little in your own esteem; you may be little and yet you may be greater in your estimation than those who are the greatest! See to it, then, that your low estate does not make you proud any more than your high estate.

Again, success often has a very sorry influence upon humility. The man was humble before his God, till God had given him the great victory over the Moabites, but then his heart was lifted up within him, and the Lord forsook him. When he was little in Israel, he bowed before the Most High; when he became great, he exalted himself. Great success is like a full cup, it is hard to hold it with a steady hand. It is swimming in deep waters, and there is always a fear of being drowned. It is standing on the top of the pinnacle of the temple, and Satan often says, "Cast yourself down." But on the other hand, lack of success has just the same tendency. Have you not seen the man who could not get a congregation, and who insisted that it was because he was a better preacher than the man who did? I sometimes read a magazine, the message of which is this—if you want to be a good preacher, you must preach according to the outlines which are given you in this magazine! There are some who do this, but still find their chapels empty; then says the magazine with all complacency—"The men who get the congregations are always the weakest men; they are always the men who have the least mental power, while we who have but a few, a mere handful—we are the intellectual people." "The mob always will," they say, "run after the foolish men." So that the brother who gets no success, comforts himself with this thought—that providence is quite wrong, and that the Christian public are quite mistaken that *he* ought to be, if things had been right, the most popular man living, and that it is quite a mistake he is not. Now, lack of success has a very great influence on some men to make them feel, "Well, if I cannot succeed in getting other people to think me somebody, I will think everybody else, nobody, and I will elevate myself above them all in my own opinion." Now, I am speaking some home-truths. I have received a deal of advice, myself, and I think I may sometimes take the liberty of giving it to others. I hope that those who are always thinking of success as certainly involving pride, may also take to themselves the comfortable reflection that their non-success, suggesting as it may very bitter thoughts about their Brothers, may also be pride, only in another direction!

But then, again; long enjoyment of the Master's presence has a tendency to make us proud. To walk all day in the sunlight brings us in danger of sunstroke. Better not sit too near the fire, or one may get scorched. If we have nothing but full assurance, we may come to be presumptuous. There is nothing like the heat of summer to breed putrefaction. When you have long-continued joys, fear and tremble for all the goodness of God. But on the other hand, long-continued doubts will breed pride. When a man has long been doubting God, and mistrusting His promise, what is that but pride? He needs to be somebody and something. He is not willing to believe his God in the dark—he thinks, in fact, that God deals harshly with him, in allowing him to be in despondency at all! He thinks he always ought to have joy and satisfaction, and so it comes to pass that his doubts and fears are as ready parents of pride, as assurance could have been. In fact, to cut short a very long story, for I might go on with these two sides of the question all morning, there is not a position in the world where a man cannot be humble if he has *divine grace*; there is not a station under heaven where a man will not be proud if left to *himself*; I pray you, never think that leaving one station and getting into another will be any help to your humility. 'Tis true the peasant boy in the valley of humiliation sang—

*"He who is down need fear no fall
He who is low no pride,
He who is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."*

But I dare say that very same boy was sometimes singing in that very valley, songs of despondency, psalms of pride, and wicked rebellion against his God! It is not the *place*, it is the *heart*! It is not the *position*, but the *grace*! That man is as safe on a pinnacle, as on level ground if God holds him up; and he is as much in danger in the valley as he is upon the high place if God is not with him. If the Lord forsakes him, he will fall in either place! If the Lord is with him, he will stand in every position! I have thus hinted at some of the dangers to which humility is exposed.

III. And now, thirdly, SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS BY WHICH WE OUGHT TO BE PROVOKED TO HUMILITY OF SPIRIT.

1. First, let us draw some arguments *from ourselves*. What am I, that I should be proud? I am a man, that is to say, a worm; a thing that is and is not. An angel—how much he surpasses me, and yet the Lord charged His angels with folly, and the heavens were not pure in His sight. How much less, then, should

the son of man, a creature full of sin, lift himself up and exalt himself as though he were something? Verily, man at his best estate is altogether vanity; his life a dream, an empty show. Oh, vain man, why should *you* be proud? Think of our mortality. In a few more years we shall be worm's meat. Caesar's dust shall be eaten, eaten by the most base of creatures! Take up the skull of some departed one in your hand and say, "What had this man to be proud of?" Go to some morgue and mark the corruption; look on some body which has been buried but a little while—what a heap of loathsomeness! And yet you and I carry about with us the elements of all that putridity—the food of all that rottenness! How, then, dare *we* be proud? I have at home a picture which is so admirably managed that when you look closely at it, you see two little children in the bloom of youth at play, enjoying each other's company. If you go some distance from the picture, the outlines get more and more indistinct and standing some few yards away from it, it turns into death's head, with vacant, empty eyes, and the bones of the skull and the jaws—a perfect death's head. Now, this is just *we*! When we are looking with our poor short-sight of time, we look like fair beings that are full of life; but stand at a Scriptural distance, and view these things, and you soon perceive that we are nothing, after all, but death's heads! What right, then, have we to be proud? Begin not to be proud, man, till your life is secure—and you know that will never be! You bubble, boast not of the many colors you have—you shall directly burst. You glorious rainbow, exalt not yourself because of your varied hues—when the sun withdraws its light, or the cloud moves, you are gone! Oh, you fleecy cloud that is so soon to burst on the earth, and be dissipated forever—think not of yourself and your fleecy glories—for you shall soon depart and be gone! Every time your humility gives way, and your pride lifts up its head, remember that you are mortal, and the skeleton may teach you humility.

But there is yet a stronger argument than this. What are you but depraved creatures? When the child of God is at his best, he is no better than a sinner at his worst, except as far as God has made him to differ! "There goes John Bradford—but for the grace of God." No, there goes Paul to curse—if *not* for the grace of God. There goes Peter to be a Judas—unless Christ shall pray for him, that his faith fail not. A sinner saved by grace and yet proud? Out on such impudence! God pardon us, and deliver us from that evil!

But, then, let us remember we are not only depraved so that we are *inclined* to sin, but we *have sinned*, and how can we then be proud? We are sinners whose best "good works" deserve the wrath of God, and the hot flames of hell—how can we venture for a single moment to stand as those who had done anything meritorious or could claim anything of our God? Verily, you and I may stand up today and say, "What is man that You should be mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?" The more we think of ourselves, if guided by God's Spirit, the more reasons we shall find for "Serving God with all humility."

2. But there are not only reasons in ourselves, there are reasons *in Christ*. Our Master was never exalted above measure. You never detect in Him one proud or scornful glance upon the meanest of the mean or the vilest of the vile. He condescended to men of low estate, but it did not look like condescension in Him. He did it in such a way that there was not the appearance of stooping. He was always on their level in His heart. He ate and drank and sat with publicans and sinners, and all in such an easy, happy spirit, that no man said of Him, "Look how He stoops." Everyone felt that stooping was His natural attitude; that He could not stand up and be proud; it would be unbecoming in Him. "And shall the servant be above his Master, or the disciple above his Lord?" You who are purse-proud, or talent-proud, or beauty-proud, I beseech you, think how unlike you are to the Master. There was nothing in Him that would keep man back *from* Him, but everything that would draw them *to* Him. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and being in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." Look at that strange sight, and never be proud again! There is the God of heaven, and with the basin in His hands and the towel on His arms—He is washing His disciple's feet; and here are you and I, instead of washing other men's feet, we want *them* to anoint *our* heads, and pour on the balmy cordial of a flattering unction, that we may say of ourselves, "I am rich and increased in goods," whereas by that very desire, we prove ourselves to be naked, and poor, and miserable! By the love of Christ, then, let us seek to be humble.

3. There is yet one other source for arguments, though, of course, there are so many that I could not mention them all, and that is, God's goodness towards us, which should make us exceedingly humble.

You remember that text which says, "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, hearts of compassion and humbleness of mind"? Now, I have known some who, believing that they were the elect of God, have put on haughtiness of looks! You know the school I allude to; certain gentlemen who are the elect, and nobody can ever come near to them; all other Christian people, if saved, which is a great question with them, will at least be saved so as by fire. Verily they appear to read the text thus—"Put on, as the elect of God, pride and self-conceit." Like another text which says, "See that you love one another with a pure heart *fervently*," which I think some people read the wrong way, upwards, and they make it out, "See that you *hate* one another with a pure heart fervently." And oh, how fervently they have done it! How fervently they have hated one another! Now the mercy of God in having elected us—the mercy of God in having bought us with the precious blood of Jesus Christ—should tend to keep us very low in the dust of self-abasement—

***"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"***

What was there in you that Christ should buy you with His precious blood? What in you that you should be made the temple of the Holy Spirit? What is there in you that you should be brought to heaven; that you should be made to sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob at the right hand of God? What if you have been grafted into the good olive tree? Remember, you were once branches of the wild olive, and you are now nothing but grafts. What if your branch hangs down with the weight of its produce? There was a time when it brought forth nothing but the apples of Sodom, and the grapes of Gomorrah! Bless God and thank Him that the root bears you, but you bear not the root. What have you that you have not received? Who made you to differ? Your very gifts are given you by electing love; God gave them not because you deserved them, but because He chose to do so. He has made you a vessel unto honor, chastened you and made you in a fair and goodly mold; made you a fair vase, showing forth the skill of the Master. But who made you; who made you? Look back to that clay pit; look back to the potter's house, to the fashioning fingers, and the revolving wheel, and surely you will say, "My God, unto You be the praise for what I am; but of myself, I am less than nothing; I am worthless and useless; unto You be all the glory."

IV. I shall now come to my last point, upon which, with excessive brevity, I would speak to myself. Indeed, I have been all the morning speaking to myself as much as to you.

I have now a story suggested to me. There was an excellent lady who accosted me one day, and told me that she had always prayed that I might be kept humble. Of course, I was excessively grateful to her, although it was a very usual thing, so I said to her, "But do you not need to pray the same prayer for yourself?" "Oh, no," she said, "there is no need; I do not think there is any tendency in me to be proud." Well, I assured the good lady that I thought it was necessary for her to always pray, for as sure as ever she thought she had no tendency to be proud, that proved at once that she *was* proud already! We are never, never so much in danger of being proud as when we think we are humble!

Well, now, let us turn to practical account what I have said. You and I have a great work before us. I speak now especially to my church and congregation. We are about to enter into a large edifice, having large designs in our hearts, and hoping that God will give us large success. Let us have humble motives in all this. I hope we have not built that house that we may say with Nebuchadnezzar, "Behold this great Babylon which I have built." We must not go to our pulpit, and to our pews with this soft note ringing in our ears, "Here will I make unto myself my nest, and gain a great name." Or, "Here will be members of the largest Baptist church to receive a part of the honor which is bestowed upon the success of the ministry." No, let us go into that house wondering at what God has done for us; marveling that God should give such grace to such a church, and that it should have such innumerable conversions in its midst. Then, when we have settled upon our work, when we see that God is blessing us, let us still keep very low before Him. If we want to lose God's presence, it can soon be done—pride can shut the door in the face of Christ. Only let us take out our tablets and write down, "God is for me, therefore let me be proud"—only let us say with Jehu—"Come, and I will show you my zeal for the Lord of Hosts," and God's presence will soon depart from us and Ichabod will be written on the front of the habitation. And let me say to those of you who have already done much for Christ as evangelists, ministers, teachers, or what not—do not sit down and congratulate yourselves! Let us go home and think of all the mistakes we

have made, all the errors we have committed, and all the follies into which we have been betrayed, and I think instead of self-congratulations, we shall say, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes sees You, therefore do I abhor myself in dust and ashes." Let us humble ourselves before God! You know there is a deal of difference between being *humble* and being *humbled*; he who will not be humble, shall be humbled! Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, and He shall lift you up, lest He leave you because you hold your head so high. And should I be addressing any here this morning who are very much exalted by the nobility of rank, who have what the poet calls—

*"The pride of heraldry,
The pomp of power,"*

be humble, I pray you! If any man would have friends, let him be humble. Humility never did any man any hurt. If you stoop down when you pass through a doorway, if it should be a high one, you will not be hurt by stooping; you might have knocked your head if you had held it up. He who is willing to be nothing, will soon find someone who will make him something; but if he will be something, he shall be nothing, and all men will try to make him less than nothing! Go then, I pray you, as Christian men and women, and speak with the poor and needy. Be kind and affectionate towards all men. Let your Christian life suggest Christian courtesy and Christian charity.

As for you who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is useless to recommend you to humility, for how can you get the flower till you have the root? Begin, I pray you, with the root! This is the root of every Christian grace—*faith in Christ!* Come to Jesus today, just as you are. Trust Him with your poor, guilty soul. Believe Him to be both willing and able to save you. Repose your confidence in Him alone. You will then be saved, and being saved with such a salvation, you will bring forth humility as one of the sweet fruits of the Spirit of God, and your end shall be everlasting life, by the grace of God!

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